

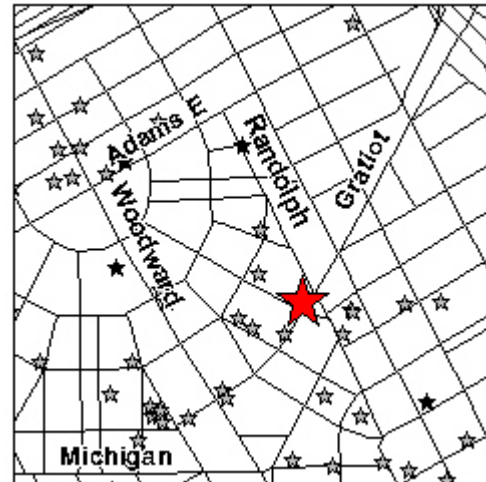
Breitmeyer-Tobin Building

1308 Broadway

Local	✓	2/16/79
State		
State Marker		
National	✓	3/10/80



Breitmeier-Tobin Building



Historic overview:

The eight-story Breitmeier-Tobin Building was a pioneer office building constructed in 1906. It was built for John Breitmeier Sons, Florists, the premier florist company in the city of Detroit. Phillip Breitmeier, its president and a nationally renowned horticulturalist, would serve as mayor of Detroit from 1909-10. He also served on City Council during 1937-8. In 1926, the ownership of the building was transferred and the building was renamed the Penisular Bank Building.

By 1936, the building was approximately 75% vacant. The Metropolitan Life Insurance Company, occupied the eighth floor, and was noted for its willingness to grant small insurance policies to African Americans. About this time, they stopped sending agents house-to-house to collect premiums, leading to a steady stream of people entering the building to make payments in person. It was during this period that the building began renting offices to African Americans, one of the first downtown buildings to do so.

Benjamin Tobin acquired the building in 1944. Tobin marketed office space to black professionals, and many notable blacks occupied space there over the years. Included were the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, the largest Black union in the United States; and the prestigious law firm of Loomis, Jones, Piper and Colden. Loomis became the first Black appointed Assistant Prosecuting Attorney for Wayne County in 1927, and Jones became the first Black appointed Records Court Judge in Michigan in 1950. Harold Bledsoe also held offices in the Breitmeier-Tobin Building, and had many achievements such as: first Black attorney on the State Attorney General's staff, one of the founders of the first Black Democratic organization in the nation, the Michigan Federated Democratic Club, and helped write Michigan's new constitution in 1963.

